

The Permanent Diaconate

By Deacon Arden Wolterman

The present deacon formation class will conclude with ordination in June of 2012. The next formation class will begin in Sept. of 2012. Individuals who wish to be a part of this next class, who sense a call to the permanent diaconate, must first complete a year of discernment, called the aspirancy year, which will begin in Sept. of 2011. To this end, Bishop Gainer has requested that pastors submit candidates for the next class by March 11, 2011. The information in this article is meant to give some insight into what Church desires of a permanent deacon. The quotes are taken from the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, which was adopted by the Bishops of the United States in August 2005.

Diaconal Ministry “One of the great legacies of the Second Vatican Council was its renewal and encouragement of the order of deacons throughout the entire Catholic Church. The Council’s decisions on the diaconate flowed out of the bishops’ discussions on the sacramental nature of the Church. The Church is ‘like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race. . . .’ ‘In her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity.’ ‘In particular, ‘a deeply felt need in the decision to reestablish the permanent diaconate,’ Pope John Paul II recalled, ‘was and is that of a greater and more direct presence of Church ministers in the various spheres of the family, work, school, etc., in addition to existing pastoral structures.’ ‘The deacon is ordained precisely for service in both the sanctuary and the marketplace.’ The deacon is to strive to live and transmit the Living Word in the workplace and in the wider community either explicitly, or by his active presence where public opinion is formed and ethical norms are applied.

The deacon is ordained to a threefold ministry of word, liturgy and charity, and every deacon is expected to undertake each of these ministries in some way. The ministry of charity or service is most characteristic of the deacon. Charity and service, however, depend on, and flow out of the ministries of word and liturgy. Deacons in the Diocese of Lexington are assigned to a parish as the central focus of their ministry of word and liturgy. The liturgical ministry is exercised almost exclusively within the parish, however, a significant part of the deacon’s ministries of word and service are to be exercised in the “marketplace”. The deacon “can be a great strength, opportunity, and witness to the laity on how they too might integrate their baptismal call and state in life in living their Christian faith in society.”

Almost all permanent deacons receive both of the sacraments of service, marriage and holy orders. They are to bear witness to both sacraments in a complimentary way. In addition, “Permanent deacons are to take care of their own and their family’s needs using income derived from their full time employment”. Deacons may be hired by the diocese as Pastoral Associates, Parish Life Directors, or in number of other positions. While being a deacon may enhance these ministries, the deacon is not compensated for diaconal ministry. This is to maintain a “direct presence of Church ministers in the various spheres of the family, work, school, etc., in addition to existing pastoral structures.”

This is a very brief outline of the ministry of a permanent deacon. If you have any indication (from within yourself or from family and friends) that you might have a vocation to the Permanent Diaconate, this is an opportunity to discern if you are indeed called to this ministry. If you know of someone you believe might have this vocation encourage them to contact us or let us know and we will contact the individual. To obtain more information you can consult the Deacon Formation website at <http://formation.cdlex.org> or you can e-mail Deacon Arden Wolterman at abwolterman@cdlex.org or Deacon Tim Weinmann at tweinmann@cdlex.org to obtain additional information. If you would like to have a discussion concerning the ministry of the permanent deacon please call Deacon Arden Wolterman at (859) 268-9067 or contact any member of the Cathedral Pastoral Staff.